



A museum devoted to the detective (left) is an elementary stop for aficionados. In the Sherlock Holmes Pub, devotee Roger Johnson (below right) assesses a “chemical corner” similar to the one described at 221B Baker Street in “The Empty House,” while evocative objects (below left) include cigars similar to those favored by Holmes.

enced by Dr. Joseph Bell, whom he met at the Edinburgh Infirmary and whose diagnostic powers amazed his students and colleagues. Also, Conan Doyle had read the works of Edgar Allan Poe, including the 1841 “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” featuring inspector C. Auguste Dupin. Notes for an early draft of *A Study in Scarlet*—first called “A Tangled Skein”—describe a “Sherringford Holmes” who keeps a collection of rare violins and has access to a chemical laboratory; Holmes is aided by his friend Ormond Sacker, who has seen military service in Sudan. In the published version of *A Study in Scarlet*, Sacker becomes Dr. John H. Watson, who was shot in the shoulder by a “Jezail bullet” in Afghanistan and invalided in 1880 to London—“that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained.” As the tale opens, Watson learns from an old friend at the Criterion Bar of “a fellow who is working at the chemical laboratory up at the hospital [St. Bartholomew’s],” who is looking to share lodgings. Watson finds Holmes poised over a test tube in the middle of an “infallible” experiment to detect human blood stains. Holmes makes the now-immortal observation: “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.” (Holmes pieces together a series of clues—Watson’s deep tan; an injury to his left arm; a background in medicine; a haggard face—to deduce that Watson had served as an army doctor there.) The physician, intrigued, moves in with Holmes into the “cheerfully furnished” rooms at 221B Baker Street.

The address is another shrine for the detective’s devotees—although, as any expert will attest, 221 Baker Street existed only in Conan Doyle’s imagination. In the Victorian era, Baker Street went up to only number 85. It then became York Place and eventually Upper Baker Street. (Conan Doyle was hardly a stickler for accuracy in his Holmes stories; he garbled some street names and invented others and put a goose seller in Covent Garden, then a flower and produce market.) But some Sherlockians have made a sport out of searching for the “real” 221B, parsing clues in the texts with the diligence of Holmes himself. “The question is, Did Holmes and Watson live in Upper Baker or in Baker?” says Roger Johnson, who occasionally leads groups of fellow pilgrims on expeditions through the Marylebone neighborhood. “There are arguments in favor of both. There are even arguments in favor of York Place. But the most convincing is that it was the lower section of Baker Street.”

ONE DRIZZLY AFTERNOON I join Johnson and Ales Kolodrubec, president of the Czech Society of Sherlock Holmes, who is visiting from Prague, on a walk through Marylebone in search of the location Conan Doyle might

